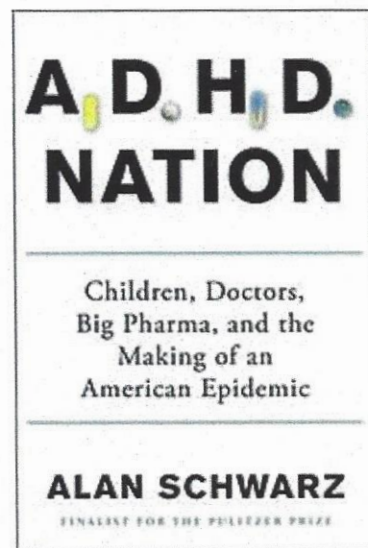


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REVIEWS



 **ADHD NATION**

Children, Doctors, Big Pharma, and the Making of an American Epidemic

by Alan Schwarz

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A troubling look at the systemic overdiagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and a chilling analysis of the effect ADHD medications have on patients, especially children.

New York Times investigative reporter Schwarz (*Once Upon a Game: Baseball's Greatest Memories*, 2007, etc.) begins this hard-hitting book by making sure readers understand that, despite the prevalence of false diagnoses, ADHD is a legitimate condition that affects some children and adults; in these cases, appropriately prescribed medication may work wonders. However—a very significant however—in the 50 years since ADHD was clinically defined, it “has become, by far, the most misdiagnosed condition in American medicine.” Stunningly, in some states, 30 percent of school-age boys are diagnosed, the majority of whom are put on powerful stimulants such as Ritalin or Adderall. While the intentions of the prescribing doctors may have some merit, the fact remains that physicians and pharmaceutical companies alike assure parents that ADHD drugs are “safer than aspirin.” The author pulls no punches in his in-depth portrayal of this falsehood and the prevalence of the drugs in schools and colleges across the nation. Adolescents routinely and casually abuse stimulants to such an extent that school officials often shrug their shoulders at the problem rather than instituting rules to protect students. Worse, Schwarz describes how doctors misconstrue the dangerous side effects of stimulants as evidence of other maladies and prescribe additional drugs such as anti-anxiety medication. Tragically, many kids become quickly addicted and fall into a downward spiral they are helpless to prevent. The author, while vehement in his arguments, is no alarmist; his facts are meticulously sourced, and he relies on numerous first-person narratives from patients, parents, doctors, and pharma reps to make his argument. In no uncertain terms, he states that without immediate action to reassess the status quo, countless patients may face dire consequences.

In this powerful, necessary book, Schwarz exposes the dirty secrets of the growing ADHD epidemic.